

A Picture

I'm not looking at a photograph—
instead I see my father in my mind
where there are no lines
to trace
with the fingertips of words,
nor any shadows or expressions
to interpret or discern.
There is no weight here
of forgotten fish
hanging by a string,
no shotgun's barrel
catching a glint of
cold morning light
to describe to you.

My father is not leaning
against a car or a truck
he's not smiling or frowning
or waving at the camera,
he's not looking away.
My father's eyes are not black
when I know they are blue,
his hands are not still
when I know they shake.

I do not see
in an image of my father
something which I possess
but cannot express.
My father does not appear to be
anything that he is not.

When I was young my father
rode roughshod and
his despotism ruled
my dreams.
When I am older my father says
I only wanted,
and it's true he did,
and does.

Soon my father will become
a grandfather and none

of the photographs
have yellowed or turned
soft about the edges.
Nothing has faded and become
indistinct.

I see my father clearly:
he is still alive,
and like whiskey
he has mellowed with age.
I drink of my father
and he goes down easy.
Inside my father makes me warm.

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